

Rising to the Challenge from a Grantee Perspective

Office of Community Services (OCS)
Division of Energy Assistance (DEA)
Administration for Children & Families (ACF)
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

March 1, 2021
2:15 pm – 3:15 pm

Sharnice Peters, Program Analyst, DEA
Patrice West, Program Specialist, DEA



OCS Perspective

OCS Guidance

- FY 2021 LIHEAP Plan submission Action Transmittal
- CARES Act Supplemental Funding FY 2020, May 8, 2020
- Initial COVID-19 Program Guidance, April 1, 2020
- ACF Grants Flexibilities in Conducting Human Services Activities Related to or Affected by COVID-19, April 1, 2020
- DCL Partnership to Address the Spread of COVID-19, March 12, 2020



Today's Speakers:

- Denise Surber (Virginia)
- Andrew Bryk (New York)
- Madelena Kee (Navajo Nation)
- Thomas Hartnett-Russel (Indiana)





Grantee: Virginia Department of Social Services
Presenter: Denise Surber
Manager, Energy Assistance Program

VA – Spending CARES Act Funds

- May 2020 - VA received \$23 million in LIHEAP CARES Act funding.
- June 2020 - We issued \$11 million in Supplemental payments.
- September 2020 – FY 2021 application began?
- To date – Approved over \$3 million in payments.
- Spring 2021 – We are planning to obligate and spend the remaining CARES Act funding.
- May extend our Crisis Assistance component or begin our Cooling component early.
- May issue supplemental payments to the COVID-19 Emergency Assistance Program (Energy Assistance Program (EAP)) caseload



VA – Policy Changes

- Removing requirement for a disconnection/termination notice to be eligible for certain services; allowing past due balance instead.
- Allowing approval of full benefit amount at initial application rather than requiring submission of multiple bills during the Cooling Assistance component.
- Working with Cooling Assistance vendors to allow our staff to have inquiry access into their system to allow account information.
- Completion of a preapproval process for Cooling Assistance.
- Allowing more usage of client statement for verification purposes in early stages of the pandemic.
- Allowing payment to Crisis Assistance vendors who provided approved repairs/replacements after component ended.



Contact Information:

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Energy Assistance Program (EAP)

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Grantee: New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance
Presenter: Andrew Bryk, HEAP Coordinator

New York State implemented several policy-related changes to the HEAP program since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in an effort to help New Yorkers maintain social distancing while obtaining the benefits they need. Additionally, the HEAP Bureau responded to the inquiries and needs of local social service districts, clients, utility companies and essential fuel vendors.



2019-2020 Regular and Emergency

- Issued a directive reminding certifiers that they were essential and that services must continue
- Provided and communicated the Governor's Executive Order declaring fuel dealers as essential businesses to vendors
- Regular and Emergency component operation dates extended through August 31, 2020
- Second and Third Emergency heat and heat related benefits made available
- Continued authorization of emergency benefits permitted concurrently with utility shutoff moratorium



2019- 2020 Heating Equipment Repairs, Replacements and Clean & Tunes

- Suspended in-person application and interview requirements for the Heating Equipment Repair and Replacement (HERR) component
- Both benefits remained open year-round to address no heat emergencies and equipment cleanings



2019-2020 Cooling Assistance Component

- Additional funds allocated to component
- Expansion of program to include applicants residing in government subsidized housing with heat included in rental costs
- Applicants temporarily permitted to verbally attest to medical condition to substantiate the need for an air conditioner



2020-2021 Program

- Increased Regular benefit add-ons for households at or below 130% FPL and vulnerable households
- Increased benefit amounts for households with heat included in rental costs
- Training via WebEx
- Regular component opened two weeks early
- Expansion of Regular and Emergency components under consideration, funding permitting
- HERR and C&T will operate year-round, funding permitting
- Temporary suspension for in-person HERR applications and interviews remains in effect
- Equitable eligibility and increased funding for Cooling Assistance



Contact Information:

New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance

Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)

Andrew Bryk, LIHEAP Coordinator

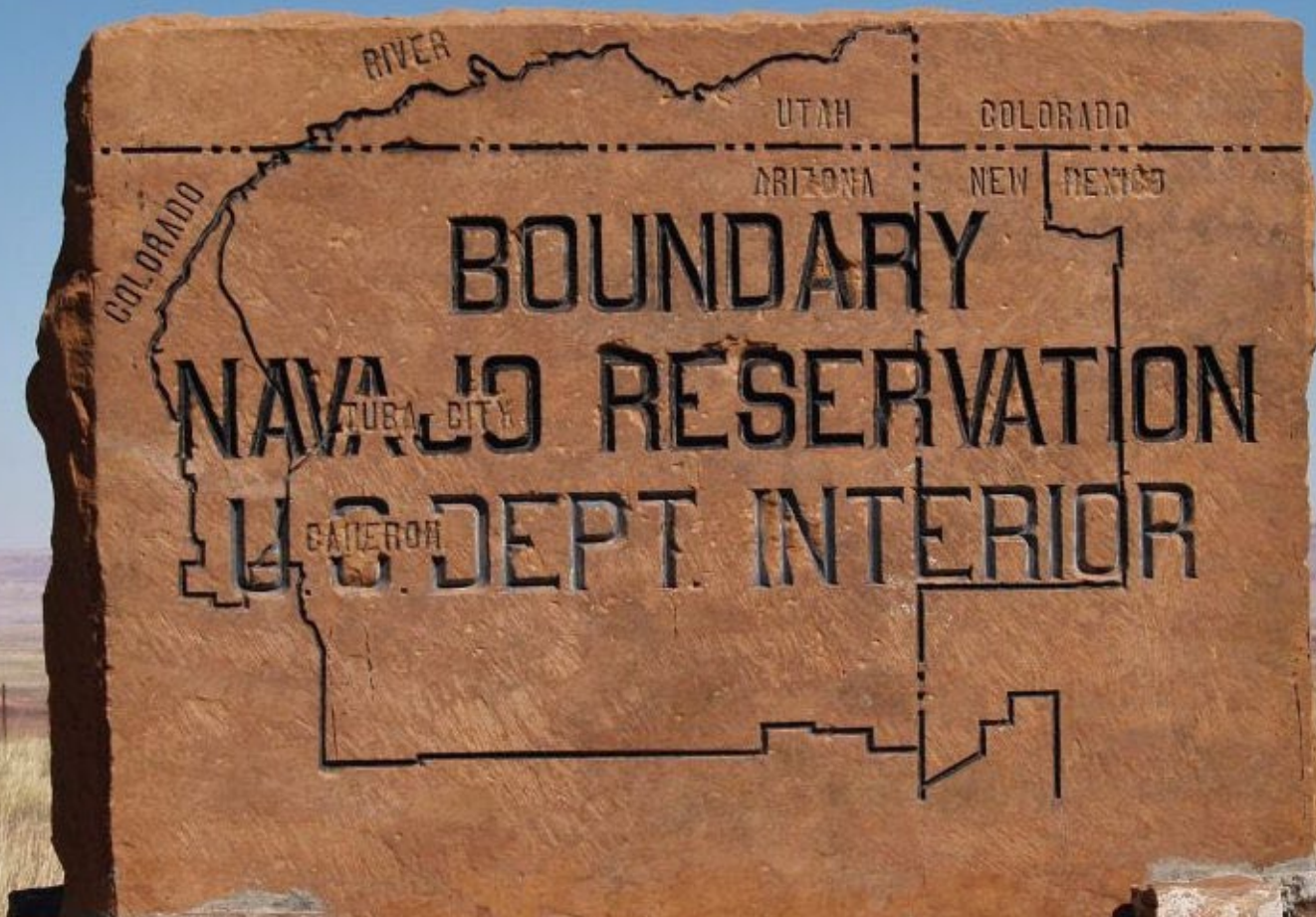
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Grantee: Navajo Family Assistance Services
Presenter: Madelena Kee, Senior Programs and Project Specialist



Introduction: Navajo LIHEAP

- Navajo Nation extends into AZ, NM and UT
- Largest land-based Tribe spanning over 27,000 square miles
- 2nd largest Tribe with over 300,000 members
- Navajo Division of Social Services, one of 16 divisions, under the Executive Branch:
 - Operates 3 Departments & 3 Programs with 588 employees through 58 direct service offices and centers
 - Serves nearly 14,000 clients monthly
 - Aims to connect all departments/programs through an electronic and paperless case management system





COVID-19 on Navajo Nation

Navajo Nation Executive Orders

March 13, 2020 - Navajo Nation declares Public Health State of Emergency for COVID-19

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 001-20

Executive Orders

- Twelve (12) Executive Orders issued in 2020
- Two (2) Executive Orders issued in 2021

February 2, 2021– U.S. President Joe Biden declares the Navajo Nation as a major disaster area to receive assistance with COVID-19 response efforts.

<https://www.ndoh.navajo-nsn.gov/COVID-19/News-Update>



EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 001-20

DECLARING A STATE OF EMERGENCY DUE TO THE CONFIRMATION OF THE COVID-19 VIRUS IN REGIONAL AREAS SURROUNDING THE NAVAJO NATION, CLOSING THE NAVAJO NATION GOVERNMENT OFFICES, AND SUPPORTING THE CLOSURE OF ALL SCHOOLS AND EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES ON THE NAVAJO NATION

**NAVAJO NATION OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT
MARCH 13, 2020**

WHEREAS:

1. The President of the Navajo Nation serves as the Chief Executive Officer for the Executive Branch of the Navajo Nation government with full authority to conduct, supervise, and coordinate personnel and program matters. 2.N.N.C. §1005 (A);
2. The President shall have the enumerated power of issuing an executive order for the purpose of interpreting, implementing or giving administrative effect to statutes of the Navajo Nation in the manner set forth in such statutes. 2.N.N.C. §1005 (C)(14);
3. With the concurrence of the President of the Navajo Nation, the Emergency Management Commission shall have the power to declare a state of emergency affecting the Navajo Nation and to obtain, coordinate and oversee assistance, whether in the form of goods, services, equipment, motor vehicles, or personnel, from all Divisions, Departments and Enterprises of the Navajo Nation for use in addressing the requirements of the People in any declared emergency. 2 N.N.C. § 884(B)(1)(3);
4. The Emergency Management Commission declared an emergency due to the confirmation of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in regional areas surrounding the Navajo Nation. 2 N.N.C. § 884(B)(1), *See* Emergency Management Commission resolution CEM 20-03-11;
5. An Executive Order shall have the force of law upon the recipient. 2 N.N.C. § 1005(C)(14).





COVID-19 on Navajo Nation

Navajo Nation Public Health Emergency Orders

March 18, 2020 - Navajo Nation declares Public Health State of Emergency for COVID-19

[Public Health Emergency No. 2020-001 - Limit Mass Gatherings Due to COVID-19](#)

Public Health Emergency Orders:

- Thirty two (32) Public Health Emergency Orders issued in 2020
- Two (2) Public Health Emergency Orders issued in 2021

<https://www.ndoh.navajo-nsn.gov/COVID-19/News-Update>

PUBLIC HEALTH ORDER
NAVAJO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
NAVAJO OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & PROTECTION PROGRAM

March 18, 2020

Public Health Emergency Order

Public Health Emergency Order to Limit Mass Gatherings and Gatherings Due to COVID -19

The Navajo Office of Environmental Health and Protection Program, Navajo Department of Health, duly designated as and herein the (Regulatory Authority), announcing that in light of the Navajo Nation Declaring a Public Health State of Emergency (CEM-20-03-11) Wednesday March 11, 2020 and therein “. . . that the threat of transmission of COVID-19 needs to be mitigated to reduce the risk of exposure to the Navajo People and resultant consequential public health impacts.” Resultant consequential public health impacts that pose a threat to the health, safety, wellbeing and property of the residents of the Navajo Nation due to, but not limited to, among other things, illness from COVID-19, illness-related absentees from employment (particularly among public health and medical personnel, public safety, emergency medical services personnel and persons engaged in activities and businesses critical to the economy and infrastructure of the Navajo Nation), and potential closures of schools or other places of public gatherings.

THEREFORE, NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that in accordance with the authority vested in the Navajo Department of Health by enabling legislation CO-50-14, do hereby declare the current outbreak of COVID-19 a condition of public health importance by CEM-20-03-11 as an infection, a disease, a syndrome, symptom, an injury or other threat that is identifiable on an individual or community level and can reasonably be expected to lead to adverse health effects in the community, and that poses an imminent threat of substantial harm to the population of the Navajo Nation.

NOTICE IS FURTHER GIVEN that the following definitions are adopted for the purpose of this Order:

Definitions: As used in this Public Health Order, the following terms shall have the meaning given to them, except where the context clearly requires otherwise:

1. “Businesses” and “typical office environments” includes organizations, governmental organizations, political subdivisions, or other entities engaged in commercial, industrial, or professional activities.
2. “Conditions of public health importance” means an infection, a disease, a syndrome, an injury or other threat that is identifiable on an individual or community level and can reasonably be expected to lead to adverse health effects in the community.
3. “Disease” means an illness, including those cause by infections agents or their toxic products which may be transmitted to a susceptible host.
4. “Individuals” means natural persons.





Situation Report #357

Navajo Nation Dikos Ntsaaígíí-19 (COVID-19)



Last Updated: February 21, 2021

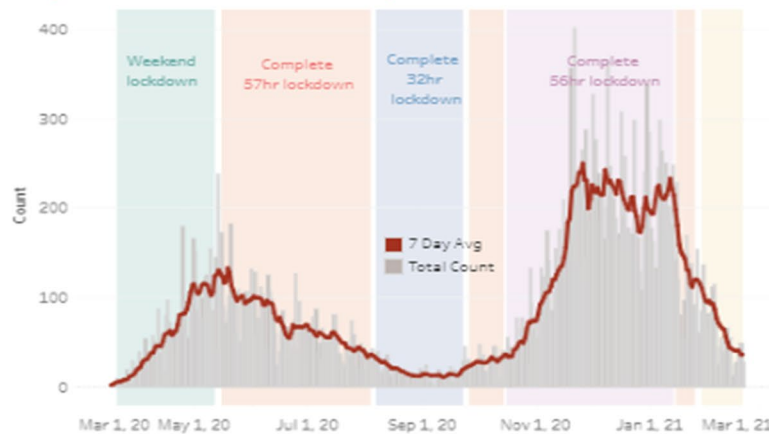
Navajo Nation Residents

Total Confirmed Cases¹ 29,535 New Cases from Last Update: 27	Total Recovered 15,989	Total Confirmed Deaths 1,144 New Death(s) Reported: 2
Total Tests Completed² 242,063	Total Positive Tests³ 37,650	Total Negative Tests 193,823

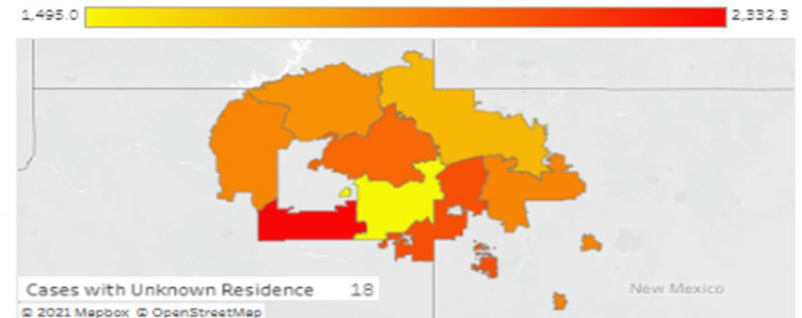
Service Area Confirmed Cases

Bordertown	Chinle	Crownpoint	Ft. Defiance	Gallup	Kayenta	Shiprock	Tuba City	Winslow
8,120	5,438	2,848	3,486	4,671	2,628	4,989	3,576	1,881

Daily Confirmed Cases on Navajo Nation in All



Navajo Nation Service Area Rates per 10,000 population



**Map reflects estimates on the total number of cases by population area since March 2020, NOT the number of cases in the past 7 or 14 days as presented in Gating Criteria. This map does not reflect current risk levels.

*Click on service area to display more information. Click outside service area to display Navajo Nation information. Ramah is included with Gallup service area and Alamo, Tonajilee are included with Crownpoint service area.





Reshaping LIHEAP Services

1. Update Policies and Procedures

- Guidelines for CARES Act LIHEAP Supplemental Funding
- Implement LIHEAP Grant Flexibilities

2. Improving our Infrastructure

- Implement the Tribal Assistance Systems (TAS) case management database
- Improve Internet services
- Install new office equipment (tablets/phone systems)





LIHEAP Services Provided

Process

1. Application Intake

- Drop box
- Email/Mail/Fax
- Payment Processing

2. Outreach

- Coordination with Temporary COVID Housing, Hotels and Hospitals



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Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP)

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Grantee: Indiana Housing and Community
Development Authority

Presenter: Thomas Hartnett-Russell, Community
Programs Manager

Overview

- Internal Operational Changes
- Supporting the Subgrantee Network
- Connecting Applicants with Subgrantees



Internal Operational Changes

- Transitioned to remote work effective March 16, 2020.
- Many tools that helped us transition were already in place.
 - All IHCD staff issued a docked notebook computer rather than desktop.
 - VPN access was already available to most team members.
 - Telephone system operated using VOIP, enabling team members to access their telephones to place and receive calls from the computer and access voicemail.
 - Microsoft Teams rolled out in autumn 2019.
- While some team members have transitioned to a hybrid work model in which they work in the office twice a week and work remotely three times a week, many continue to work remotely 100% of the time.



Supporting the Subgrantee Network

- LIHEAP administered in Indiana by a network of 21 subgrantees
- Subgrantee agencies were not consistent in how they responded to pandemic.
- Microsoft Teams made it easy to hold meetings with subgrantees while keeping everybody engaged and retaining feeling of face-to-face meeting.
- Instituted weekly network calls to allow for dissemination of information, consistent communication, and increased connection.
- Introduced budgetary flexibilities to help with increased expenses or needs.
 - Technological enhancements line item.
 - Awarded unspent admin dollars that had been earmarked for trainings and conferences that had been canceled.



Connecting Applicants with Subgrantees

- Applicant access most vulnerable and fragile link in chain.
- Needed to balance protecting health and safety with providing access to LIHEAP and related services.
- IHCD first rolled out online application module during PY2019.
 - By PY2020, online database had become database of record.
 - Online application module allows for application via computer, tablet, or smartphone.
 - Supporting documents may be uploaded or submitted by taking photo with device's onboard camera.
 - Online queue triages applicants self-declaring crisis.
- Paperwork/documentation flexibilities rolled out.
 - Allowed subgrantees to accept applications and certain documents by telephone.



Connecting Applicants with Subgrantees

- Need to reach a new demographic
 - Economic fallout of pandemic had created a need for LIHEAP services where it had not previously existed.
 - Many households were potentially now eligible that had never utilized LIHEAP services or may not have known that LIHEAP existed before.
 - Expanded media coverage to inform the public of availability of program and eligibility criteria.
 - Adjusted our statewide Loss of Income policy to better address households with employment impacted by the pandemic.
 - Engaged industry groups representing interests of industries disproportionately impacted.
 - Sought out and presented to community groups.
 - Partnered with utility vendor partners to help educate customers.
 - Extended program year application deadline.



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Summary

Virginia

Issued Supplemental Payments from Cares Act funding for \$11 million
Policy Changes

New York

Essential workers

Carry forward changes from 2020 to 2021 such as Expansion of program to include applicants residing in government subsidized housing with heat included in rental costs
Applicants temporarily permitted to verbally attest to medical condition to substantiate the need for an air conditioner

Navajo Nation

Update Policies and Procedures

Improving their Infrastructure to include improving internet services
Updating their processes to include application intake and outreach

Indiana

Remote Work

Introduced budgetary flexibilities to help with increased expenses or needs through
Technological enhancements line item Awarded unspent admin dollars that had been earmarked for trainings and conferences that had been canceled.
Online application and the paperwork/documentation flexibilities rolled out.

